

I. Aufsätze

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Notes on Chinese Story Tellers

It is well known that the medieval Chinese story teller told his stories in the marketplace, or in shops. Like his Turkish colleague, he did not rely entirely on his memory, but to some degree upon *hua-pen*, so-called prompt-books, which supplied general outlines of stories. These tales contained poems which the story-teller inserted into his prose narration, in a way similar to the use of poems by Turkish story-tellers.¹ The prompt-books were not written in everyday language, but in a more poetic style. Recently, such prompt-books and their relation to the later novels have been studied,² but we do not know what the story-teller actually told the audiences.

Story-telling was customary in Mainland China until the Revolution and is still practiced in Taiwan today. I studied actual narrations and performances of three contemporary Chinese story-tellers and one puppet-show player in the hope of clarifying certain aspects of story-telling in earlier periods. In this work during the Fall of 1967, I was greatly helped by Mr. Wang Ch'ing-li who sought out the story-tellers, introduced me to them, had numerous contacts with them and tape-recorded the texts used here. I want to express my thanks to him.³

All three story-tellers worked in the P'u-shan-t'ang, a small, one-room temple in the Liang-chou street off Yen-p'ing pei-lu in Taipei. There were 14 wooden benches in the temple, facing the altar itself. The altar was raised to form a kind of platform and a lecture podium and it had drawers in which the story-tellers kept their books. At 8:00 PM⁴ about 15 persons were present, later there were more than 25 listeners. Most of the audience consisted of old men, but there were also at least three young men. Occasionally they sipped tea, supplied without charge by the temple. In general, the audience was attentive and interested, though one old man fell asleep for short periods of time. That evening, Mr. K'ang was the first story-teller, an evidently intelligent man of about 45 years of age who was wearing glasses. He held a printed text in one hand, gesticulated with the free hand, and spoke in a very clear voice, not too quickly. Occasionally, he injected exclamations and raised his voice, but usually, he held the same voice level. He talked without interruption for one hour, when

¹ See W. Eberhard, *Minstrels Tales from Southeastern Turkey*, Berkeley, 1955.

² See for instance Yoshitake Iriya in *Monumenta Serica*, vol. 9, p. 298—299; C. Birch in *Bull. School of Oriental and African Studies*, 1955, pp. 346—364; R. Irvin, *The Evolution of Chinese Novel*, Cambridge 1953, p. 24, etc.

³ This study is a part of the Chinese Family Life Study Project, financed by the Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley. I want to express my thanks to the Institute for its assistance.

⁴ On one of the days of my visit, November 30, 1967.

another story-teller, Mr. Li, tapped him on the shoulder, indicating that he should come to an end. However, Mr. K'ang continued until 9:30. His story was taken from the novel *Hsüeh Kang fan T'ang*. At 9:30, Mr. Li began to tell the story of *Pai Mu-tan*, also a popular novel, but he had neither a text nor notes of any kind. He gesticulated only exceptionally, his voice was as clear as Mr. K'ang's, and he had an excellent pronunciation. The audience regarded him as better than Mr. K'ang. Mr. Li, too, was vivacious and intelligent and about 45 years of age. Because of the length of Mr. K'ang's narration, only two narrators performed on that night, while on the previous night, a third man, another Mr. Li, had begun to tell the story of *Wan-hua-lou*. He was present in the audience this night, but left early.

Mr. K'ang and the second Mr. Li lived in San-ch'ung, a suburb on the other side of the river nearby. The first Mr. Li lived close by the temple. All three story-tellers were employed and paid by the temple organization. The organization, consisting of elders in the city quarter where the temple is situated, regards the financing of story-telling as a meritorious act. It serves to entertain men, who may not have the means to go to a theatre, or lack access to radio and television, or men who, being surrounded by women and noisy children in crowded living conditions have no quiet place in their houses or no other man to talk to. Here, in the temple, they have a chance to relax with a cup of tea and listen to the stories, or to have a nap, or to talk with other men without being bothered. There are several such story-telling places in town, not all of them connected with temples: a tea-house operator may ask a story-teller to entertain his guests and reward him. There are, close by the temple, several "old-men tea-houses" mostly without story-tellers, though. There are also groups of old men who use the court-yard of the Tz'u-sheng kung, a temple nearby, to sip tea and to tell one another stories without having a professional story-teller among them.

We can imagine that before the existence of movies, television and radio, poor people had few possibilities of entertainment. They could watch, and still do watch, street theatre plays, street shadow plays, or the various types of puppet and marionette plays. All these shows were and are free of charge, because some rich person or group of persons sponsored them in order to gain religious merit or to fulfill a promise made to a deity. But normally such shows in the street have been restricted to few occasions during the year, mainly the time of the birthdays of deities, and they last only a few days, until the players move on to another quarter of the city or to another village, upon invitation by other sponsors. Besides, such shows usually were and still are quite noisy. If one wants to sit down, one has to bring a chair or stool, and if one wants tea, one has to buy it. The story-teller has no music, and therefore, his place is quieter, especially if he performs during the night, when most small children are asleep or at least tired and not as noisy as during the day. Thus, the story-teller has had an important function among the lower classes in cities and towns.

To be a story-teller today is not a full-time job. During the day, the man normally has another full-time job, so that story-telling is only the source of desirable extra-income, not a way to make a living. The story-teller has to be

literate, while it is not at all sure whether the majority of his audience today is illiterate. We guess that many in the audience could well read, but preferred to listen to the stories. Most story-tellers today seem to use printed novels. We can only guess that their colleagues in earlier periods did the same, and using comparative materials we might hypothesize the following stages of development: 1. Story-tellers invented their own stories, memorized them and recited from memory. These stories contained poems which served as memory helps by summarizing the content of a section or by highlighting a special event in the story. 2. At the time when literacy became more common, the story-tellers made brief notes of the content of their stories and wrote down the poems. 3. When these notes had become more elaborate, they were printed and circulated; at the same time, other people wrote stories which were printed and distributed for use by story-tellers. For the benefit of a reading public, writers wrote full-length novels which the story-tellers adapted to their own purposes. 4. Finally, story-telling dies out because people prefer to read the printed texts or to see the story as a film or television show.

In Turkey today, the process is between the first and second stages. In China, the second stage was certainly reached in 1000 A.D., if not earlier. In Taiwan, we still can see the transition from stage 4 to stage 5. The poems seem to die out in stage four: while the texts still contain poems, the story-teller does not recite them.

Let us now see what the story-teller does with the printed text which he used. We mentioned already that the story-tellers apply different techniques: Mr. K'ang held the text in his hand and acted as if he were reading from the text. Mr. Li told us that to refresh his memory he had read the text at home before coming to the temple, but he recited from memory. The second Mr. Li was observed reading in the temple to prepare himself, but he—when he performed—also held the book in his hand. To show the differences, I will first translate a section from Mr. K'ang's text, *Hsüeh Kang fan T'ang* (chapters 6—7). He used a Shanghai edition printed around 1930 which is now quite rare in Taiwan. I found a Tainan 1966 reprint of this Shanghai text. The novel "Hsüeh Kang rebels against the T'ang Dynasty" is one of a large cycle of novels, describing the heroic acts of the members of the Hsüeh family starting from the time of the beginning of the T'ang dynasty, around 600. While one of these novels, "Hsüeh Jen-kui castigates the East" (*Hsüeh Jen-kui cheng tung*) is based upon some historical events in the fight of the T'ang emperors against Korea, and while Hsüeh Jen-kui is a historical person, the historicity of the main actors in our novel is quite questionable. The action is put into the end of the 7th century, the time when Empress Wu got into power and her nephew Wu San-szu played an important role. The cycle of novels about the family Hsüeh—which has some similarities with the cycle of stories around the family Yang in the 10th and 11th centuries—is the basis of numerous theatre plays and ballads, and most of the main events in these novels are known to any Chinese audience. Thus, we should keep in mind that the story-teller does not tell a story with which the audience is unfamiliar. Here is first a section of M. K'ang's performance:

Narration I:

Hsüeh Ting-shan, the king of both Liao,⁵ had four sons. One was Hsüeh Meng, born by Kao Lan-ying. One was Hsüeh Yung, born by Kao Hung-ying.^(a) One was Hsüeh Kang, born by Fan Li-hua. One was Hsüeh Ch'iang, born by Ch'en Chin-ting. Hsüeh Kang was number three. At the age of just 17 years he was taller than 8 feet.^(b) When two bulls fought with one another, he could conciliate them, he could throw the two bulls down.^(c) His face looked really wicked, (but) his character was really loyal and straight.^(d) He liked to take up the cudgels for any injustice. He ate the hard and not the soft.^(e) The stronger (a man was), the more he dared him; the softer, the more he helped him.^(f) So people said of him that he had a bandit's face, but a gardener's heart. When Hsüeh Kang beat people up only lightly, they received serious wounds; if strongly, they died. Bad people were beaten to death by him, and nobody could claim a life, because his father was the king of both Liao and his power was really great. So, when bad people saw him, it was as if they had met their ancestor.^(g)

Hsüeh Kang had some friends: Lo Chang, King of Yüeh, Ch'in Hai, count of the country of the Huns, Ch'eng T'ung, Ch'eng Fei-hu, Ch'ing-shan,^(h) Kao-ling who went around everywhere.⁽ⁱ⁾ Often, they returned home only at midnight. When Hsüeh Ting-shan, the king of both Liao, went fighting in the west, he could not go without his number 3 wife, Fan Li-hua, to Hsi-Liao.⁶ And as she loved her son, he could not at all restrain his son Hsüeh Kang.

One day, in the evening, the friends had drunk and were drunk,^(j) when they saw the treacherous⁷ Left Chancellor Chang T'ien-tso, at midnight also in the street. "Now look, the Chancellor at midnight rides along the streets in a sedan-chair. That one, we will have to give him a lesson," so they said and went to the sedan-chair. "Ha, stop. Who has the great courage, to drive around in the imperial city at midnight in a sedan-chair?" Chang T'ien-tso in his sedan-chair was afraid: "Sirs, I am the Chancellor Chang T'ien-tso."^(k) "Ah, it is you? Is a chancellor a civil official or is he a military official?" they asked him. Chang T'ien-tso said: "A civil official". They asked again: "A civil official. And what is the time now?" "Midnight." "Military officials make the rounds at midnight. Do civil officials, too, with their men make the rounds? Ha, you probably were out on private pleasures." "No, no. How could I have such a great courage. I had a few cups of wine⁸ and want to return home by

⁵ This title is already mentioned in chapter 1 of the novel. No such country or countries existed at that time. Possibly the word "both" (liang) is a transformation of "west" (hsi). There was a country of West-Liao (see next note), but it came into existence only centuries after Hsüeh's death. Hsüeh, often mentioned in plays and novels, is the son of Hsüeh Jen-kui, one of the heroes at the beginning of the T'ang, famous for his fight against Korea.

⁶ This country, "West-Liao", the country of the Karakhitay, was in Western Central Asia. Fan Li-hua is a hero-woman and famous through numerous plays.

⁷ This minister, according to the novel and the plays was on the side of the Empress Wu and, therefore, is regarded as treacherous.

⁸ The novel says that he drank at the house of Wu San-szu, the nephew of Empress Wu, and the hero of numerous erotic novels, regarded as even more evil than the Empress.

now." "You are chancellor, but you do not care about the great affairs of the realm and only think of drinking! At this time, you still do not know the imperial order? As a chancellor you do not know the imperial order?" "I do not know the imperial order. How about you? You are not anybody and you still patroll around with men?" "Dog's fart!"^(a) We are military commanders, and we have privileges. But you are a civil official and you, you are out for private pleasures."

Hsüeh Kang called, and they all began to fight. Hsüeh Kang kicked with his foot and threw Chang T'ien-tso down.⁽¹⁾ Then he kicked him with his foot in the back "Ai, Ai".^(m) "You are still crying? If you go on, you will be dead." Ch'eng Fei-hu and his brother then took the big pole of the sedan-chair, which Chang T'ien-tso had used, and beat him. They beat Chang T'ien-tso's behind, changing a white turtle⁽ⁿ⁾ into a red turtle, and a red turtle into a black turtle.^(o) They in all gave him 40 blows, until Chang T'ien-tso could no more cry. Then they all were satisfied and went away.

Chang T'ien-tso at this time, crawled into the sedan-chair,^(p) (but) he did (could) not sit in it. Quickly he returned to his home. He was not willing to accept this,^(r) and thought of reporting to the court in the morning.

Hsüeh Kang and the others walked and discussed all the time while walking. "To beat up Chang T'ien-tso this time was really a pleasure, but if in the morning at 4:00 o'clock^(s) he reports to the emperor, that is not good. It really may be bad for me and for you."^(t)

As soon as Ch'eng Fei-hu and his brother came home, their father said:^(u) "Ha! What did you two do that you come home so late?"^(v) Then Ch'eng Fei-hu explained: "Your sons returned early, but on our way we met Chang T'ien-tso,^(w) and Hsüeh Kang and the others beat him up.^(x) We are afraid, this could perhaps involve you, father." Ch'eng Wan-niu^(y) said: "Ham! What is this all about?" Ch'eng Fei-hu told him what had happened in the street, that, if Chang T'ien-tso was not dead, he was half-dead, so he was afraid he might make a report, which really could be troublesome. "I beg you, father, to help us." Ch'eng Wan-niu said: "Don't worry, I will go to grandfather together with you." Ch'eng Yao-chin, too, heard them and asked father and sons to come in. They came to his bedside, and he asked what had happened^(z). They he said: "Ah, don't worry, don't worry. If you had beaten someone else, I would not have been happy, but since it was Chang T'ien-tso I am extremely happy. Let everything be done by your grandfather."^(aa) When they knew that grandfather would stick up for them, they said happily: "Big guy, grandfather, big guy." "Why? Your grandfather is old?" "Not old, but a big guy."^(ab) "Next time talk a bit nicer."

Text 1: Hsüeh Kangfan T'ang, chapter 6:

Now, Hsüeh Ting-shan, the king of both Liao⁹ had four sons: one was Hsüeh Meng, the son of Kao Lan-ying. One was Hsüeh Yung, the son of

⁹ See note 5.

Kao Ch'ung-ying. One was Hsüeh Kang, the son of Fan Li-hua. And one was Hsüeh Ch'iang, the son of Ch'en Chin-ting. Of these four princes, only Hsüeh Kang was irascible. He was just 17 years of age, his face was like black lacquer, his nose like a chimney, his strength inexhaustible, he could drag a bull by the tail. He liked to take up the cudgels for any injustice and exert himself for others. In the city of Ch'ang-an, he sometimes killed people, but because of the great power of the house of Hsüeh, there was no way of taking action; even if one made a complaint with the officials, none of them dared to accept it. Thus, the people of Ch'ang-an gave him a nickname, calling him "The city-pervading tiger." The men with whom he was friends were Lo Chang, King of Yüeh, Ch'in Hai, count of the country of the Huns, as well as Ch'eng T'ung, Ch'eng Fei-hu, Wei-ch'ih Ch'ing-shan, Wei-ch'ih Kao-ling. Guys like these banded together in groups of 3 to 5, went into a shop to drink or went out of town to hunt; at midnight, they went out or they returned. As he was the beloved son of née Fan, the King of both Liao could neither control or restrain him.

Now, on that day Hsüeh Kang, together with Ch'in Hai, Ch'eng T'ung, Lo Chang, Ch'eng Fei-hu, Wei-ch'ih Ch'ing-shan, Wei-ch'ih Kao-ling and others went for pleasure out of town and returned to town only in the evening, when they all together went into a wine shop. They went upstairs and drank, shouted and sang loudly while drinking heavily. They did so well into the quiet night and until all the heroes were half drunk. Then they went down, gave orders to their subordinates, paid and left through the gate of the shop. When they saw the moon shining like daylight, they did not mount their horses, but walked and enjoyed the moon. When they had passed a number of street crossings, it just so happened that an event took place: they saw in the distance the bright shine of lanterns and a big sedan-chair with people calling in front and pushing in the rear shouting. Hsüeh Kang's drunken eyes were unfocused; he recognized that on a lantern there was written "Left Chancellor Chang," and so he knew that this was the treacherous minister Chang T'ien-tso and called to his brothers: "Look that Chang T'ien-tso there, as if there were nobody here. During the daytime he cannot look at me and you, so he has to make use of this dark night. How about giving him a handsome lesson?" All the heroes were inebriate, clapped their hands and said: "Fine." So they all went ahead and stopped the sedan-chair. Hsüeh Kang shouted: "Who dares to violate the (laws about moving about during the) night?" When Chang T'ien-tso in the chair saw that it was such a meritorious man, he descended quickly from the chair and said: "Sirs, you do not have to question. This is old Chang T'ien-tso." Lo Chang said: "So it is you. Where do you want to go at midnight?" Chang T'ien-tso said: "I, your old man, was invited for dinner at Wu San-szu, the duke of Chung-chou, and somehow I am returning home a bit late." Ch'eng T'ung shouted: "Fart! You as chancellor do not think of fulfilling your duties with complete loyalty but rather prefer to drink at other places and to return home so late. Do you not know the imperial order? How do you explain

your violating the night (curfew)?" Chang T'ien-tso with a light smile said: "I, the old man, do not know the imperial order and am violating the night (curfew), but why are you gentlemen also on the street during the night? If you are not wild tigers or yaksha, how do you explain it?" When Hsüeh Kang heard this, he got very angry and shouted: "Stop talking. We are descendants of meritorious officials, sons of military commanders, and we have to patrol the city during the night, especially in order to take care of small violators of the law. You, as a civil official, walking around in the dark night instead of being in your house, really have a nerve. You have now violated the night (curfew) and logically deserve a beating." All heroes called in unison "Beat him, beat, beat. Beat you because you violated the night (curfew), without taking into consideration that you are a chancellor." Chang T'ien-tso could not say a thing, could not shun them, was grabbed by Hsüeh Kang from the front and thrown on the ground. Then Ch'eng T'ung and Ch'eng Fei-hu took the poles of his sedan-chair, had his trousers removed and beat him with full vigor. The followers of Chang saw these princes of evil and knew very well that they could not get up against them, so they ran away into small lanes: Who would have dared to show resistance? The heroes, one after one counted 40 blows with the pole, until both legs of Chang were green and swollen and until he could not move any more, only cry in pain. After that, the heroes went away, laughing. If you do not know how Chang T'ien-tso returned home, you will have to read the next chapter.

Chapter 7:

We said that Chang T'ien-tso was so beaten that he was half dead and cried in pain for a long time. When his men saw that the heroes were far away, they dared to come forth, carried Chang T'ien-tso into the sedan-chair and went home. Chang was unspeakably mad; he quickly took medicine and also ointments and wrote, still during the night, a report and brought it in for the morning audience. But nothing on this. Rather let us talk about Hsüeh Kang and his heroes who went on together after the beating. Hsüeh Kang said: "Friends, we got into the mood and had our pleasure in beating him up. But now we have to prevent him from reporting tomorrow." Lo Chang and Ch'in Hai said, "Why should we be afraid of him? That treacherous bandit will not dare to report and provoke us, even if he eats a tiger's heart and a panther's liver." Hsüeh Kang said, "As he cheats the good people and fears the bad people, he will certainly not seek out you two, but surely he will seek out me." Ch'eng T'ung said, "No difference. Just wait until we brothers are home and told our father and aroused our grandfather. When they argue with him tomorrow in the audience, I guarantee that nothing will happen." Hsüeh Kang was very happy. They all went home, but we will not talk about that. We will only say that Ch'eng T'ung and Ch'eng Fei-hu went home where Ch'eng Wan-niu and Ch'eng T'ieh-niu had already finished their family dinner, were about to go to bed, and

asked their sub-commanders, "Where did our two brothers go? Why are they still not back at this hour?" The sub-commanders said, "During the day, the third prince of the king of both Liao wanted them. They certainly went to his palace to drink." They had not yet finished, when the two men returned. As soon as Ch'eng Wan-niu saw them, he cursed: "Animall! You can drink your wine quickly, why do you return at this late time?" Ch'eng T'ung said: "I was early on my way home, but on our way, we had a great misfortune. That is, why we are late. And because of that misfortune, we could not get away so easily." (Ch'eng) Wan-niu said, "What big misfortune? Why could you not get away?" Ch'eng T'ung said, "Well, there was the Chancellor Chang T'ien-tso who was on his way home from drinking at Wu San-szu's house. I with Lo, Ch'in, Hsüeh and other brothers had had drinks and came out of the shop, met Chang T'ien-tso who assumed airs in his sedan-chair, arguing that we had violated the curfew. We could not control ourselves, pulled him out of the chair, took the poles of the sedan-chair and beat him 40 blows. Now we are afraid he will report tomorrow morning and persecute us." Ch'eng T'ieh-niu got very angry and said, "He is a civil official. If he is not nicely at home during the night but drinks in other places and walks around, how can he argue that others have violated the curfew? My son, you were right in beating him up. You exhibited yourself as our noble descendant." Ch'eng Wan-niu said, "I think that guy fears Lo Chang, who is a relative of our Emperor by marriage, and Ch'in Hai, who is the Emperor's nephew. He will certainly not involve him. He will certainly report the king of both Liao and ourselves. He commits crimes and violates court officials. We have to take precautions and not let us be defeated by him, otherwise we will loose our status as honored officials. Brother, I will go with you and see father and let him know, make him get excited. Then, naturally, nothing will happen." Ch'eng T'ieh-niu said, "Brother you are right." So the two quickly went in. At this time, Ch'eng Yao-chin, who was already asleep, heard the two sons and called them in. Wan-niu and T'ieh-niu went to the bed and Ch'eng Yao-chin asked them, "Why are you coming to me during the night?" Wan-niu said, "Father, it is because of the two sons. They had had drinks with Lo Chang, Hsüeh Kang and others and went home. On their way, they met Chang T'ien-tso who came home from drinks in the house of Wu San-szu. He did not make way but said that our sons had violated the curfew. Who would have thought that these youngsters, excited and aroused, ended up pulling him from the sedan-chair and beating him up with 40 blows of the poles. How can Chang T'ien-tso let this sort of thing go? Certainly he will report tomorrow morning. If he wins, would we not loose our status as honored officials? Therefore, we children wanted to inform our father."

"What should be done so that we do not lose?", Ch'eng Yao-chin said, "Such a thing really goes too far. Chang T'ien-tso did not consider his own fault, but accused others of a fault. And then, my grandson and Hsüeh-Kang and the others are all sons of meritorious officials, sons of military generals

who have the right of controlling the imperial city. If for such an impertinence he received 40 blows from my children, what is wrong with it? Don't worry, go to bed. Tomorrow morning I myself will go to the audience, and I guarantee, nothing will happen." Wan-niu and T'ieh-niu were very happy, left and went to bed. And when Ch'eng T'ung and Ch'eng Fei-hu saw that their grandfather was willing to stand up for them, they also went to bed without sorrows . . .

When we compare Mr. K'ang's narration with the text which he had in his hand, we see that he made a number of changes, some small, some big. The first change was the translation of the fairly literary, compact language of the text into colloquial language, which means mainly that he added grammatical particles and loosened the sentence structure. Simultaneously, he translated the text into his Fukienese, Min-nan dialect. This was necessary because his audience would not have understood Mandarin. But what he did was more than simply pronounce all words according to the rules of his dialect: he actually replaced idioms and individual words used in Mandarin by idioms and words used only in Min-nan. Translating a more or less literary standard-language text into a colloquial and local version seems to have always been the story-tellers' most important task in their work with prompt-books or other textual helps.

In addition to this process of translation, the story-teller K'ang abbreviated names (h) and replaced complex words or expressions by simpler words, often with the same sound (a, g), sometimes, such as in the case of curses, using stronger language (q). The introduction of idioms and stereotypes from the vernacular (s) and of puns (ab) probably was to make the narration more lively.

In general, his version was shorter than the text, which he achieved by leaving out unimportant persons and their actions (p, t, y) or by general contraction (u, w, i, j, v, aa), and by omitting repetitions (x, z). This procedure contradicted my first impressions: when I saw him performing, I had the feeling not only that his narration was longer than the text, whose pages he turned, but also that he stressed certain points by repeating important or interesting details. In fact, he omitted a good many details which, in my opinion, would have made his story more lively. Only when the text had details too brief to be clear did he elaborate upon them (d, k, n).

Finally, he sharpened the contrasts between the figures by emphasizing positive traits of his hero (Hsüeh Kang), by adding new traits and by omitting or weakening traits which apparently he considered being unfavorable (b, c, e, f, l, m). For instance, the description of the color of the hero's face is omitted, because the audience today would not regard a black face as a good trait, while formerly, black faced heroes were well-known positive figures in the Chinese theatrical tradition. Parallel to this, the narrator stressed the negative traits of the villain, left positive traits out or weakened them, and even added new negative traits (o, r). While this procedure reflects a certain degree of inventiveness or creativity, we cannot say that Mr. K'ang created a version substantially

superior to the printed version. And indeed, the audience did not regard him as one of the best narrators.

It should be noted that Mr. K'ang did not follow the division into the chapters of the novel. He started with an episode from the middle of chapter 6 in the text and he stopped in the middle of a chapter at a place where an episode came to a preliminary end. He continued his tale of the generals of the Hsüeh family until December 3, when he announced that the following chapters (to chapter 100) were so boring that he preferred not to present them. So on that day, he switched to another popular novel, *Chi-kung chuan* ("The life of Chi-kung"), a novel of 280 chapters in the version which he used. Here he started with the first lines of the novel, but reworked them more than he had done with the other novel:

Narration 2:

In the province of Chekiang, the area (fu) of T'ien-t'ai, in a village called Yo-i, there was a man with the family name Li, personal name Mou-ch'un. This Li Mou-ch'un had formerly been a military governor at court, but because he was not strict in commanding soldiers, he had resigned and returned home. He went to his home town and did good works. His good works were very numerous, but although he did so many good works, he heard them, when he went out and listened to the talk of the people, saying this: "As one can see, Mr. Li is not a real benefactor. If he really were, he would have a son."

The printed text had the following:

Text 2:

At court there was a military commander of the garrison of the capital with the family name Li and the personal name Mou-ch'un, whose home town was in the T'ien-t'ai district in the area (fu) of T'ai-chou in Chekiang province. He was married to a (nee) Wang. Husband and wife liked to do good works, and Excellency Li was extremely humanitarian. He was not strict in commanding soldiers. Therefore, he resigned and went to his home town. At home, he loved to do good deeds and to give away things; he repaired bridges and rebuilt roads, he helped those in danger and assisted those in need. In winter time, he gave cotton cloth, in summer time, he distributed medicines. When Excellency Li walked around in the streets, people called him "Li, the good." But among them, there were people who said, "Li, the good, is not really a good man. If he were, how come that he does not have a son?"

II

When I met the second story-teller, Mr. Li, he was in the middle of the novel "White Peony" (*Pai Mu-tan*) a heroic-fantastic novel set in the early 16th century, which with its 46 chapters is about 30% shorter than *Hsüeh Kang fan T'ang* and about 80% shorter than *Chi-kung chuan*. We remember

that Li did not hold the book in his hands, but told us that he had read at home the section that he wanted to tell during the hour of his scheduled performance. When my assistant started tape-recording, Mr. Li began by telling how the emperor rewarded some officials who had helped him defeat and capture the rebel Liu Ching; that Liu was then executed and more officials received rewards. The text¹⁰ had all this in much more detail, especially more detail about the execution of Liu and his adherents, followed by an episode about an epidemic in the year 1516, which was stopped by a purification ceremony performed by the Heavenly Master Chang. Mr. Li omitted this episode and replaced it by a much more interesting new episode which we present here in his own words:

Narration 3:

Who would think that one day in his harem the emperor remembered the two beauties^(a) whom he had seen in his dream? Then he thought: "The realm is at peace and I would like to travel to I-chou.^(b) This would be very fine." He mentioned this immediately to the Controller of Ceremonies in the harem. He also thought of Su-nan^(c) and Yang-chou. When the Controller of Ceremonies in the harem^(d) heard this, he was very frightened, knelt down and said, "Majesty, impossible, because last time when your Majesty wanted to go to Su-chou, you almost lost your life.^(e) This time, you could not travel under any circumstances." "Deserving minister! Last time there was that Liu Ching^(f) who together with bandits came to T'ung-chou and attacked me. Now Liu Ching is already dead, and when I go out this time, I will not let it be known to anybody. I will only take Wang Ho with me. Nothing can happen."

Ching Yang^(g) said, "Your Majesty, you may take Wang Ho out, but if the civil and military dignitaries come to check, I am afraid that Your Majesty's life on the roads will be hard to preserve. I beg Your Majesty to listen to your old slave's report and not go outside for pleasures."

The holy emperor said, "I have already decided in my heart and will under no conditions renounce the trip.^(h) Immediately order Wang Ho to come." This Wang Ho, son of an honest man named Wang Yü,⁽ⁱ⁾ was at present the Eunuch Overseer of court clothes and had to help the emperor put on formal dress. Thus, at that time, he was called before the emperor. Chiang Yang said, "Wang Ho, the Emperor has asked you to guard him on his trip to Su-chou and Hang-chou. What is your opinion about it?" When Wang Ho heard it, he was very frightened and quickly kneeling down said, "Your slave does not dare to go. In case something should happen, I would not mind if my body was made into powder and my bones be broken, but would this then not involve my whole family and lead to

¹⁰ He used a Shanghai print of the 1930's. Mr. Wang copies the section of chapter 34 and down to chapter 36, which we had on tape from this text, as the text could not be found in Taipei. Later, I found an undated reprint of this text, done by the Jui-ch'eng Press in Taichung.

the eradication of my whole clan?"⁽¹⁾ The emperor said, "Don't worry. This is my plan. Ah, you may relax. Since you are afraid to make mistakes, I will make in behalf of you a one-horned edict,¹¹ that is: if I do not kill you, who would endanger your life? Don't worry. Quickly get some money, prepare two quick horses and follow me on the trip."

Wang Ho knew he could not refuse. So, forcibly, he arranged for some money and took two horses.^(k) The emperor dressed in ordinary clothes, but wore secretly an identity mark, took money and left the palace. Then he left the city and went off. We can say: Deities did not know, ghosts did not know (about it).^(l) Who knows: after a day's travel, they arrived around noon time at a town,^(m) and Wang Ho said: "Majesty, we are at a town and should eat a bit." The emperor said, "Wang Ho, from now on do not call me Majesty. I think it is good if you call me 'Excellency' or 'Master'. If you call me Majesty, I am afraid, the situation will become known." Wang Ho agreed and both went into the town and looked for a hotel. They walked and rested, and the people in that place saw that they were well dressed and very well behaved and so they came and invited them. Now Wang Ho called, "Hsiao-erh, bring some wine and food into our room." Hsiao-erh was not lazy and quickly brought it. The emperor said, "Wang Ho, come and keep me company and eat and drink with me." Wang Ho understood and ate and drank with the emperor in his room and then asked Hsiao-erh to take away the dishes.⁽ⁿ⁾ Then they prepared the beds. Wang Ho said, "Underneath, this is rice straw." He (the emperor) said, "Why do they use rice straw for the bedding?" "You do not know? If rice straw is underneath, you keep warm." "How could I know that one is warm when sleeping on rice straw? Today, this is very fine, very interesting." Subject and ruler together went to bed, and the next morning after their breakfast they left riding their two horses and went towards Su-chou.^(o) After several days, they arrived at Jui-lan-chou, entered the city, stayed one night, and the next day, just when they were about to leave, they suddenly noticed two old women who walked and talked.^(p) One of them said, "Aunt, there is again a saint. I think I will . . ."¹² The other one said, "Two, three days later I will go to the Tower of the Three Bright Ones."^(q) Emperor Wu-tsung¹³ said, "A saint has appeared in the south and I, the emperor, have never yet seen any saint. If there is a saint, I shall have to see him." So he said to Wang Ho, "Go back into town and ask where the place is. I will wait here outside the town." Wang Ho agreed and turned back into town, while the emperor waited outside. Just at that moment, a white hare came running. When he came running, the emperor's horse got frightened and started running and ran straight on for more than ten miles, until the emperor succeeded in stopping it: "You animal, so useless you are. Got frightened by a white hare?" Then he had to rest at that place. Wang Ho went into the hotel and asked the servant there: "Hsiao-erh, excuse me for

¹¹ This term, which also occurs in the text, is not otherwise known.

¹² This area and the district which the text adds, do not exist. Three words not understandable.

asking, where is that Tower of the Single Phenix?" Hsiao-erh: "Some ten miles from here. I have heard that there is some saint, but I do not know anything about him."⁽¹⁾ Wang Ho thanked him, left the town, did not see the emperor and got so frightened that his souls left him: "If the emperor is lost, I guess my life will be hard to preserve. What can I do?" He drove his horse to pursue him, but after a while, he found nobody and got very much nervous and thought: "The emperor might have left for Su-chou, so I will go to Su-chou. If I do not find him in Su-chou, then I will look for him in Hang-chou. I have to find him, otherwise, if I do not find him, they will not let me arrange anything." Thus he decided to ride towards Su-chou.⁽²⁾

Now we have to talk about that emperor. When he had waited a while on the road, and saw that no Wang Ho came: "Ah, it is going to be evening and if I do not quickly look for a hotel, what do I do?" But his baggage was with Wang Ho. "At this moment, I have not a single cash with me." So he rode on. How did he know, he went a while and there was no hotel, not even a house, only at the roadside a grasshut.⁽³⁾ It was about to get dark. "If I do not rest here—there is certainly no hotel here." So the emperor of the Sung quickly knocked at the door. The old woman in the hut heard it, opened the door and saw a middle-aged man with a long beard, sticking-out ears, hanging shoulders, stepping like a dragon, walking like a tiger. He looked like a high-class guest, therefore the old woman quickly came to greet him: "Where do you come from? Do you want to ask for the road, or what do you want to do?" Emperor Wu-tsung said to her: "I am from the Peking and am now on my way to Su-chou. Now I am here and the sun is already down, so I came to ask you whether I could stay over night here. Another day I will reward you nicely." The old woman thought, when she heard that he was from Peking: "This man from Peking is certainly a rich man, if not an official, surely a wealthy man. If I let him stay overnight, tomorrow I will certainly not lose my capital." And then she said: "Guest, if you do not mind my poor place, please come in." She asked emperor Wu-tsung to come into the hut. That grass hut had some broken chairs, and the emperor saw quickly that none of the implements in the house had any value. When he was in the room, he sat down on a chair.⁽⁴⁾ The old woman said, "Guest, what is your name? What is your job in the northern capital?" The emperor of Sung thought: "I have to invent a name. The best is to take Wu-tsung as family name and Cheng-te as personal name",¹³ and so he said, "Old mother, my family name is Wu, my personal name is Te." "So, you guest from the northern capital are Wu Te. What great business do you have? Or what official are you?" "I do not have any business, I am really an official in the northern capital." "So you are an official and a Sir; excuse me for being impolite." At this time Wu-tsung had been sitting a while, and he felt that his stomach ached, his head became dizzy, his eyes dark, and his mouth dry. In his whole life, he

¹³ The emperor's posthumous name is Wu-tsung. During his life, he could not be called by it. Cheng-te is the name of his reign period. The text uses Cheng-te as if it were the emperor's name.

had never had stomach ache, head ache. That stomach ache and head ache were solely because this emperor, since he became ruler, had never been hungry. That morning upon rising, he had had breakfast; he had not eaten in the afternoon, thus he got stomach ache and dizziness and darkness before his eyes. All that was because he was hungry: thus, one can have stomach ache, dizziness, weakness of hands and feet, and also a dry mouth. Now he said, "Old woman, my stomach aches, my head is dizzy. I feel that my mouth is dry. Do you have some tea or warm water for me to refresh myself?" The old woman thought in her heart, "At present I do not have tea in my house. How can I make tea? Ah, my in-laws gave me a can of wheat which I have not yet cooked. He says he has not eaten anything from morning to now, has stomach ache. He certainly is only hungry. I think I will cook wheat for him. That will stop his dry mouth and stop his hunger." So she made up her mind and said, "Guest, please wait a while. I will prepare something." So she quickly went into the kitchen, made fire. Ah, after a short time, the fire burnt. Then she took the wheat from her in-laws, boiled it. Normally, wheat does not cook quickly, sometimes it takes several hours until it is soft. But this was completely due to the emperor's imperial luck: that wheat just had to boil up three times and—hao—it was cooked. Now the old woman said, "Guest, you are lucky. That wheat which I cooked for you is immediately well-cooked." So she poured a bowl out, brought it out to him and put it down before him. "Guest, from Peking, this will stop your thirst and will fill you up. Eat it quickly."

Wu-tsung quickly took it and looked at it: such big grains and on the one side round, the other side flat. What may this be? Ah, I quickly eat a bite to see. Oh, it really tastes good. In fact, to stop hunger, just everything is good to eat. Then he said: "What is this?" The woman thought: "Does this man from Peking not even know what wheat is? I will explain to him." "This is what I call 'Pearl man'." When Wu-tsung heard this, he was astonished: "I am the emperor and have never eaten 'Pearl man'. Even a common person can eat pearl man."

Text 3 (p. 86, chapt. 35) , ,

Cheng-te¹⁴ was all day in his palace and had nothing to do. In his heart he suddenly remembered a beauty which he had seen formerly in a dream. She had really been according to his taste, but until now she had not fallen down (to earth). He wanted to select a person, but did not know how to start looking for her. He thought of traveling to places like Su-chou and Hang-chou and other famous places. So one day he said secretly to Ching Liu, the Overseer of Ceremonies: "The other year I wanted to travel to Su-chou and Hang-chou, but Liu Chin and the bandits caught me in T'ung-chou. Therefore, the pleasure trip did not materialize: My heart is melancholic. There now is peace in the country, and I want to go in disguise to Su-chou and Hang-chou and see the famous sites. You should deceive the civil and military officials

¹⁴ See note 13.

so that it does not leak out (that I am not here)." When Chiang Liu heard this, he was so frightened that cold sweat dripped down. He kowtowed several times and said: "How could I, slave, let your Majesty go on a big trip and completely deceive the officials? If the thing should leak out, I will be exterminated, (together with my) relatives in nine degrees. It is difficult to dissipate the hatred of the civil and military officials. Moreover, does Your Majesty not remember that the other year you were protected by the state's soldiers and yet there was the dangerous situation of T'ung-chou? Now you want to go alone on a distant trip. If something happens, my guilt cannot be punished even by cutting me into pieces of an inch." The emperor said, "The attack on me in T'ung-chou was planned by Liu Chin. Now I go secretly; people do not know it, ghosts do not know it. This guarantees no trouble will come. If you are afraid that the officials are difficult to cheat, I will hang out a plaque stating that I am sick. And I will give you a club in the form of a golden melon to protect the harem gate. You will not let any official in to start trouble. Should there be one who disobeys, you can beat him. Civil and military officials will certainly refrain. Thus, secrecy can be preserved." Chiang Liu said, "How can I deceive the six palaces, if they inquire?" The emperor said, "You are quite stupid. This is even easier. After I have left, you say I am sick. If later the main wife should inquire you tell her that I rest in a side palace. And if the side palaces inquire, you say that I rest in the garden. Until you have deceived all 36 palaces (with the concubines in them) I am already back." Chiang Liu said, "Your slave truly does not dare to take the order, but I have no other way than to listen and to obey. I still do not know who will accompany you?" The emperor said, "The Lower Overseer of the imperial dresses, Wang Ho. He is loyal and diligent in his work and can go with me." Chiang Liu immediately had Wang Ho come. Chiang Liu asked Wang Ho, "Our Majesty wants to travel in disguise to Su-chou and Hang-chou and wants you to protect him, so that he is in no danger during the travel. Do you have the courage to protect the emperor?" Wang Ho was greatly frightened, did several kowtows and said, "What great abilities has your slave that he would dare to protect the emperor? If by chance anything should happen, would I not be executed by the officials? I decidedly do not dare to accept." The emperor said, "That affair is easy" and wrote a one-horned amnesty edict,¹⁵ gave it to Wang Ho and said, "You can take this as a proof. Then what do you have to fear from the officials?" Wang Ho said, "Even with this edict, I can hardly escape punishment." The emperor said, "This is wrong. If I give an amnesty, who would dare to violate my rule? Quickly go, pack some amount of gold as travel expenses." Wang Ho could only accept the order, took some amount of gold and packed. The emperor immediately wrote an order to be hung on the harem gate, saying, "I am feeling uneasy but do not need the imperial doctor for treatment. I want relaxation. I gave to Chiang Liu a golden club. Women of the harem, princes,

¹⁵ See note 11.

relatives, civil and military officials, all are not allowed to enter and to bother me. Whoever does not obey will be punished as violator of my orders, and Chiang Liu is allowed to kill him without questioning. Pay attention and do not transgress this, my order." When the emperor had finished writing this, he gave it to Chiang Liu, saying, "You must not let anything leak out, because I am afraid that one or two rebellious, disobedient officials might follow me and plan to harm me." Chiang Liu said, "Your slave knows, but Your Majesty should not stay long, so that I, your slave, will not be killed by the officials." The emperor agreed, then took a head-scarf, put on a blue silken long dress, pearl shoes and hair socks. Chiang Liu said to Wang Ho, "If the emperor comes to a place, you should secretly often send me a message, to relieve my anxieties. If anything happens, we will first exterminate your whole clan to relieve my fury." Wang Ho said, "My only wish is that the emperor has a peaceful trip and returns soon. If anything should happen, my fault and your crime are not much different." The emperor ordered Wang Ho to leave with a horse through the Ho-hua gate and to wait there. Wang Ho took the order and left with horse and baggage through the rear gate alone, just like a servant. The emperor took a paper fan in his hand and carried on his body a small imperial jade seal. Chiang Liu sent him to the rear gate, told him again that he should return quickly, and said goodbye. The emperor covered his face with the fan more or less, while he walked and left through the Ho-hua gate, while Wang Ho was already waiting for him outside the gate. Then the emperor got on the horse, while Wang Ho walked on foot. The emperor told Wang Ho, "You must not address me as ruler. You can call me 'Excellency' or simply 'Master!'" Wang Ho accepted this order, secretly laughing, "Fine, he does not want to be emperor and wants to be excellency!" Ruler and subject travelled until the sun was close to the horizon in the west, when they saw a hotel. Wang Ho said, "It is getting dark, we should stay in the hotel." Cheng-te agreed, secretly laughing: "Since ancient times, when was there ever an emperor who stayed in an inn? This is really funny." When they came to the inn, Wang Ho took the reins, Cheng-te descended. Soon the innkeeper received them, saying, "You guest official want to stay here?" Wang Ho said, "Right. We want a clean room, two beds. Prepare one for me and my master. Hsiao-erh should carefully assist us." The innkeeper agreed several times, Hsiao-erh took the horse into the rear stable and brought master and servant into a room. Wang Ho washed the emperor's hands, let him sit down. After he, too, had washed himself, he selected wine and food and put them on the table in the room. The emperor said, "Here are no other people. We can drink together." Wang Ho therefore sat next to the emperor and drank with him. The emperor said to Wang Ho, "The food here is not as good as in the imperial kitchen." Wang Ho said, "Your excellency is funny. How could a village inn compete with the wine and dishes of the imperial kitchen?" After the dinner, Wang Ho made the beds and closed the door, helped the emperor undress and go to bed. The emperor asked, "Why did you put grass under the mats?" Wang Ho said, "These are wood stalks

and rice straw to ward off the cold." The emperor said, "If I had not travelled disguised, how would I have learned that stalks and rice ward off the cold? They are hard, and not as soft and warm as quilts." Wang Ho said, "This is how small people ward off the cold, how could they have quilts?" After one night, ruler and subject rose early. And would not Wang Ho quickly want to go? After breakfast and paying the hotel bill, Cheng-te climbed his horse and left through the gate. On the road he said to Wang Ho, "I have heard that in Kiangnan province Su-chou, and in Chekiang province Hang-chou and the West Lake all are famous places. But I have heard the proverb saying 'Of all places in the realm to visit, none equals Fukien province, and of all places in Fukien, none equals Chang-chou and Ch'üan-chou.' If we would go there, we had not travelled in vain." When Wang Ho heard this, he was greatly frightened, saying, "If we acted according to your Majesty's words, we would not be back in the capital even by next year. Furthermore, Fukien is an uncultivated land and the hearts of people are still wild. How could we go there?" The emperor said, "Why not go, as we are travelling anyway? And as we have left the capital, why should we trouble ourselves with Chiang Liu's worries? If he should cause harm to your whole clan, would he not have to fear that civil and military officials would get wind, then his own clan would hardly remain alive." Wang Ho thought in his heart, "If the ruler enjoys it so much, when will we be back? I have to urge forward. This is the best plan."

Now when Cheng-te travelled, he did not follow the big roads, and when he saw a set of mountains, he took a few days side-trips. Thus, one day he came to Jui-lan-chou,¹⁶ where he stopped overnight in Jui-yang-chen. Next day he got up, and they had gone just about a mile, when suddenly a young man in distinguished clothes came out of the mountains, just to the left in front of them. Out of the mountains to the right another man came out. When both men met, the man from the right asked, "Brother, where are you coming from?" The man from the left answered, "Recently I had nothing to do, so I just went to the Cliff of the Three Peaks and visited a saint. This was really quite interesting." After that, they went their own ways. Cheng-te took the reins and rode on, but suddenly he stopped the horse, looked at Wang Ho, and said, "I am the honored emperor and I have never yet seen a saint. Now today I hear that there is one on the Cliff of the Three Peaks. Why not visit him? Perhaps I will also meet a fairy. That would be destiny." Wang Ho warned, "Saints are pure beings. How can they mix with ordinary humans? Also, we do not know where that Cliff is and how we can get information." If you do not know, whether Cheng-te accepted the warning or not, read the next chapter.

Chapter 36:

We said that Wang Ho warned the emperor to travel to the Cliff of the Three Peaks. But the emperor said, "I think, as that man did not have a rain-

¹⁶ See note 12.

coat or an umbrella, those mountains and cliffs should be nearby. You should return to the town and ask the way. I will wait here." Wang Ho accepted the order and returned to Jui-yang where he asked an old person, "Excuse me, there is here a Cliff of the Three Peaks. Where is it? Are there saints at the Cliff?" The old man said, "The Cliff is straight south of here, and 6—7 miles away. The landscape is very beautiful there. There is a tradition that there are traces of former saints. When here the cassava flowers are in blossom, many men and women go there. How could there really be any saints?" Wang Ho thanked the old man, and fearing that emperor Cheng-te might have been waiting too long, he hastened back. Indeed, the emperor had been waiting a long time while he had let his horse graze. A white hare jumped out of the grass towards the horse, and the horse began to run in gallop towards the hills. Cheng-te pulled the reins of the horse, but who knows, that horse ran and neighted and jumped so much that the emperor almost fell off. So he could not do anything but loosen the reins. The horse ran ever faster, so that he had to hold to the horse's mane, and cried, "Horse, do you want to bring my life to an end with your strange behavior?" He let it go and heard the sound of wind in his ears. Now let us for a moment stop and say that Wang Ho came to their meeting place and could not find the emperor. He walked around there, went to a higher place and looked around, without seeing a trace. He got so frightened that his face was like the color of the earth and lamented, "Where did the emperor go? What shall I do having lost the emperor? I can neither go forth nor go back. If I should return to the capital, the officials would find out, and would they not immediately execute me?" He lamented a while, then got an idea: "Why should I not report to the local official and ask him to search for the emperor? And I will go on to Su-chou and Hang-chou and look for him there. Than I will certainly find him. Only, the emperor does not carry a penny. If he should get irritated, how could I defend myself? This is truly thousand sorrows and ten thousands troubles. I can only search for him nearby and then see further. I will go to Jui-lan-chou city, to the office of the governor saying that my master had disappeared." He walked into the office and began to beat the drum. Clerks hurried towards him and said, "Why do you beat the drum?" Wang Ho said, "I am the Overseer of the imperial dresses, Wang Ho. I have an important urgent problem, and have to see your boss." The clerks quickly went into the rear rooms and notified the governor. This governor had met Wang Ho in the capital at a previous occasion and when he heard the announcement, he let the door be opened and had him brought into the rear hall, greeted him, and sat down. Wang Ho asked that all attendants and clerks be sent out, and when the governor had them out, Wang Ho told him that the emperor was travelling, and that he got lost after coming to Jui-yang: "You quickly notify the officials to make a secret search. If the emperor should be lost and I come back to the capital, it would for you and your officials not be too good." The governor was so frightened that the sweat run down his back, and he said, "Sir, please wait a moment until I have convened all officials and we can find a plan." He then

sent servants to go to all civil and military officials in the city and asked them to come immediately. The governor told them what he had just heard, and all officials got pale. Wang Ho then described the dress of the ruler and its color: "You, sirs, have to make secret investigation. In case bad people should get wind of this and plan to kill the emperor and should he never come back, would you not all be counted as great criminals? Now prepare a quick horse for me so that I can go speedily to Su-chou and other places to make inquiries." The officials agreed, arranged for a horse, Wang Ho immediately got on it, said gooby, and left. The officials discussed, asked the local gentry in all districts to make secret inquiries, and also sent out trusted men to search. They were not allowed to make the object known.

Wang Ho started and thought, while under way: "If I send a message to Chiang Liu, my whole clan will probably be exterminated by him. The best is to keep quiet." So he hurried to Su-chou, and then to Hang-chou, and secretly asked the local officials to make a search. Then he alone went on to Fukien, to Chang-chou and Ch'üan-chou, searching without effect. Along the road he made inquiries and did not dare to return to the capital. He also did not notify Chiang Liu. But this comes later, we will not discuss it now.

Now the emperor Cheng-te rode for a while with loosened reins, until he stopped in a wild place. Cheng-te saw that all around there were no people and thought, "You animal, to what place did you bring me?" He descended, took a rest at the roadside, and waited for Wang Ho to come for a long time. But when he noticed that sundown was approaching, he thought of looking for an inn to rest. While thinking, he again mounted the horse and came to a village where there were few people and only some houses. At the roadside, in a forest, there was a small house, from which one heard sounds of weaving. He got off the horse, let the reins loose and had the horse eat grass, while he went forth and knocked at the door. When the door was opened, an old woman came out, about 50 years old, in good spirits and of unusual stature. When this old woman saw Cheng-te's brows which were like those of emperor Yao, and his eyes which were like those of emperor Shun, his dragon walk and tiger steps, she quickly greeted him saying, "You guest official come wherefrom? What business do you have here?" The emperor said, "I am a man from Peking and want to visit friends. Because my horse bolted, my servant got lost. It is already late, and I want to ask for quarters. If tomorrow my servant arrives, you will receive a handsome gift." The old woman said, "If you guest official do not mind a grass bed and a vegetarian meal, then take rest here. Please come in." The old woman just wanted to bring a chair, but the emperor, accustomed to sit in the center, took the chair and put it before the table, sat down in the middle and said, "Mother, what is your name? Who else lives in your house?" The woman said, "My name is Wang. My husband was Chou Chün who, when alive, was a student. He flunked (in his examination) and died. I live as a widow with my son Chou Yüan, now 17 years of age. He makes a living as woodcutter and is very filial. Let me ask your name, guest official." The emperor thought and cut "Wu-tsung" and

"Cheng-te" up, saying "My family name is Wu, my personal name Te." The old woman said, "Last night I had a dream that a red sun-disk fell in my hall. Your, Mr. Wu's honorable visit followed. You are from the emperor's palace, and you certainly are a famous official." When the emperor heard this, he was happy in his heart: "If she dreamed of a red sun, how could this refer only to an official? These village women are really ridiculous" and he said, "I was once an official." The woman asked, "May I ask which rank you had?" The emperor counted in his heart which rank an emperor might have, then he said, "I had no real rank." The woman: "As you did not have a real rank, it must have been very high, because there are more than 10 ranks." The emperor laughed coldly: "Right." Now the emperor (on his way) from morning to evening was terribly hungry and thirsty. His limbs were weak. But the emperor, accustomed to being served, had no idea about hunger and thirst. So he said to Mrs. Wang, "I was brought around by that horse, but nothing happened to me. Why do I feel slight pain in my stomach, why is my head dizzy, my eyes dark, my limbs without strenght, my mouth dry? Mother, could you give me tea or hot water to drink?" Mrs. Wang said, "Sir, just wait a while, I will bring it soon." She went inside and thought, "He wants tea, but I have no tea pots. According to his words, I think by this time he must be hungry and thirsty. I still have some of the wheat which my parents sent me. Why not cook it and invite him. It quenches the thirst and stops the hunger." So she quickly took the wheat into the pot, made fire and was quite astonished: normally, wheat is very difficult to cook, but now, first because of the luck of Cheng-te, secondly because of the merits of Chou Yüan and his mother, as soon as the water boiled, the sweet smell of the wheat touched the noses. She thought, "An official on special business can hardly have such great luck." The wheat was quickly ready, and when she tasted it, it was excellent. She had no sugar in the house to add to it, she only gave him a bowl of clear wheat gruel and a pair of chopsticks, gave it to the emperor saying, "We are poor and have only this poor stuff to quench your thirst. Please do not reject it." Cheng-te had never seen this food, took the chopsticks, took two bites and found it glossy, but good because of his hunger. So he asked, "What is this? It tastes so good." Mrs. Wang thought in her heart: "This must be a man of means, that he does not even know wheat gruel," and then she said, smiling, "This is Precious Gruel." Cheng-te thought in his heart: It separates just like precious jewels, on the one side round, on the other side flat." So he said, "Mrs. Wang, you must be well off, to eat this Precious Gruel." Mrs. Wang: "This unimportant gruel is not worth hanging on the teeth," and when he said this, he had already finished a bowl . . .

Now, what did Mr. Li do with the story? After all, the audience was unanimous in regarding him the better narrator.

First, of course, he did what Mr. K'ang had done: he translated the text into colloquial language and it must be said that this text is slightly more literary than Mr. K'ang's story. He also translated it into the Min-nan dialect.

Furthermore, he abbreviated the text even further than Mr. K'ang had done, cutting it down to almost half of the original length. Some of his omissions are not important, such as not mentioning the name of a man, although later he does mention the name (d); not mentioning that the hut was in a village and not a single hut in the wilderness (t); or abbreviating the description of the emperor's dinner (n). But in my opinion, other details of high interest should not have been omitted: it is certainly not easy for any person to leave the palace unnoticed. The whole trick, how the emperor succeeded, is omitted. The important fact that although the identity of the emperor should not be divulged, Wang Ho informed hundreds of officials of the fact that the emperor was travelling in disguise, is omitted (s). The fact that the emperor, out of habit, sat down in the center of the room, and that this almost gave him away, is omitted (u). Most important is that in the text the emperor wanted to visit places in Fukien. These of all places are the ancestral homes of almost all of the narrator's audience. Mentioning them, would—in my opinion—have increased the interest of the audience. Yet Mr. Li omitted this reference (c).

His own additions were very minor: once he added a proverb (l), another time a name which appeared in the text in a different place (i) and was really unimportant. Finally, he mentioned that the emperor had dreamed of two girls. The text mentions this fact in chapter 1, but not again in chapter 35. The narrator apparently assumed that his audience might not remember this detail. Another detail (f), the reference to Liu Ching, was unnecessary, because Mr. Li had mentioned Liu Ching's revolt about five minutes earlier in detail.

Mr. Li, relying upon his memory, made several errors: he gave an impossible place name at a time, when the text does not have such a name (b); twice he gave incorrect place names, due to his contracting two names into one (c, g); he gave another incorrect name (g); he changed the sex of two lesser actors (p). He let the travellers stop at noon, not at night (m), and he gave Wang Ho a horse, while in the text Wang Ho at first had no horse (k) and got one only in a later chapter.

Thus, it can hardly be said that he improved the text, or that his recital from memory was preferable to that of Mr. K'ang. My only explanation for the fact that the audience thought Mr. Li better is that his rendering created the illusion that he was truly inventive and creative because he did not consult a book.

Mr. Li had not tried to sharpen the characters of his heroes, but he seems to have attempted to give the emperor a bit more stature than he had in the text: references to the weakness of the emperor and the power of the court cliques (e), the precautions which the emperor found necessary to take against his own wives and officials (h) were omitted, and the fear of his subjects of cruel punishments for failures was underlined (j). One interesting change made by Mr. Li was that he left open the question of the existence of saints, while the text made it quite clear that belief in saints was often founded only on hear-say (r).

Mr. Li, thus, certainly took more liberties than did Mr. K'ang by omitting whole episodes and greatly contracting the text: he seemed to have retained in his memory mainly the principal line of action and to have forgotten much of the interesting and often amusing detail in the text.

III

The third story-teller, i.e. the second Mr. Li, was narrating the novel *Wan-hua-lou* („Tower of the ten thousand flowers“), a popular novel belonging to the cycle of novels around Ti Ch'ing. *Wan-hua-lou* is regarded as the introduction to *Wu-hu p'ing hsi* (The five tigers pacify the West) and to *Ti Ch'ing p'ing-nan* (Ti Ch'ing pacifies the South). The cycle around the 11th century hero Ti Ch'ing is to some degree connected with the stories around the generals of the family Yang (*Yang chia chiang*) and with numerous theatre plays taken from both cycles, in contrast to the above-mentioned novels *Pai Mu-tan* and *Chi-kung chuan* which gave birth only to very few plays. Yet, the story of the family Yang is as widely known as the story of the family Hsüeh, while the story of Ti Ch'ing is not quite as famous.

The second Mr. Li held the book in his hands, as Mr. K'ang had done. Let us compare his narration, taken on tape, with his test:

Narration 4:

Who thought that Ti Ch'ing's military craft was extraordinary? These soldiers how could they oppose him? It is only because Ti Ch'ing thought that the laws of the state were important that he did not want to run away: "This Sun Hsiu is a high official of the Ministry of War, and I am a small soldier: I am under his command. So, how could I dare run away? I have strength but do not want to use it." So he let himself be bound by the soldiers. At that time, when Lin Kui who was standing by, saw this happening, his face became green of fear and he did not dare to talk. Then, Sun Hsiu shouted loud and had him (Ti Ch'ing) bound quickly. Now Ti Ch'ing said, "Your little soldier did not violate the law. How does Your Excellency dare to catch me?" Sun Hsiu shouted loudly, "You have a nerve, why did you write that poem on the wall without permission?" Now Ti Ch'ing answered: "That poem written on the wall was written when I, the little man, was melancholic. But to write a poem is not a crime against Your Excellency. I beg you for mercy." Minister of War, Sun Hsiu, shouted: "Ai, you dog slave! What place is this that you dare write a poem without permission? As you knew that today there would be a (drill) performance, you wrote the poem specially in order to shame me. Clearly, you are a rebel, and I will settle this by applying the military law. Lin Kui! Bring him out, cut off his head and show it to the people." At this time, Ti Ch'ing cried: "Your Excellency, I, the little man, did not know this and thus violated the law. Your Excellency, please show clemency. It is this little man's first offense." After this, he knelt down and made several kowtows. Now, Lin Kui also ran to his side and implored Sun: "Your Excellency, grant him his life." Now, Minister of

War, Sun's face changed and he cried, "You chattering devil, this is military law. How can one do this in such a situation? Lin Kui, if you talk further about this, your head will also be cut off and shown to the people." At the same time, Lin Kui thought secretly, "This Ti Ch'ing must have had some quarrel with the bandit Sun. There seems to me to be no chance to get him free. Too bad: if Ti Ch'ing dies today, this is certainly an injustice. But when this Minister of War with his power is against that little hero, other people cannot interfere." So he brought Ti Ch'ing out.

Text 4: Wan-hua lou, Chapt. 9¹⁷

Speaking of Ti Ch'ing's heroic strength and the extraordinary strength of his fists: how could these soldiers ever have caught him? It was only because he thought that the laws of the country were important and this Sun Hsiu was a high official in the Ministry of War, who at this moment was in charge of the military operations, and he (Ti Ch'ing) was one of the men in his camp. How could he dare create confusion? This is (a situation) where one had power, but could not use it; had strength, but did not dare show it. So he let them push and pull. At this time, Lin Kui, who stood beside him, got an ash-grey face, but did not dare ask questions. Excellency Sun called again and had Ti Ch'ing solidly tied up. Ti called: "Excellency Sun. I, the little man, have not violated the law. Why did you catch me?" Sun Hsiu called loudly: "Slave with much courage! Why did you smear a poem on the wall?" Ti Ch'ing reported: "If you mean the poem on the wall: I, the little man wrote it one day without thought. I had no intention to offend Your Excellency. I only hope that Your Excellency in your ocean-like greatness show clemency and forgive me." Minister of War Sun shouted: "You dog slave! What place is this here that you dare write thoughtlessly and offensively? As you know that today this command has its drill, and you on purpose made this offense, it is obvious that you regard the military law as non-existent. According to military law, this cannot be forgiven." He called Lin Kui to bring him and decapitate him, then to report back. Ti Ch'ing cried: "Excellency, I, the little fellow, was uninformed and violated the law. I only ask that Your Excellency in your oceanlike greatness forgive the little fellow's first crime." He knelt down again and made many kowtows. Commander Lin, too, knelt at his left side and similarly begged that the death sentence might be rescinded. Minister of War Sun's face changed. He shouted loudly: "Stop further talking. This is military law, why seek for favoritism? If Lin Kui talks further and seeks favors, he will be decapitated together with him according to law." At that time, commander Lin thought by himself. "Ti Ch'ing must have some old enmity with the bandit Sun. It is therefore difficult to get him free by begging for leniency for him. Too bad, his death is a great injustice towards him, I cannot transgress the orders of the Minister of War." He had that little hero solidly bound.

¹⁷ Used a 1965 print of the Ta-tung Press in Tainan with 227 pages. The selection starts on p. 32.

Mr. Li in his narration, of which we gave a small portion, does not much more than translate the text into the spoken language and into the local dialect. This, too has resulted in some abbreviation, though less than in the cases of the other narrators. The novel *Wan-hua-lou* is perhaps even more formal in its style than the other two, full of expressions of courtesy and formal ways of talk used in court circles. Li has largely changed this to more common language, but has hardly added anything of his own.

IV

What is the opinion of the story-tellers about their art? We decided to interview them, and Mr. Wang Ch'ing-li, who was already well-known to them, asked first Mr. Li, the story-teller who spoke without the use of the book. He performed at the time of the interview (May 27, 1968), together with his colleague, Mr. Li (of narration 4) in the entrance of a small earth-god temple at the Tan-shui river, in front of the high wall which protects the Yen-p'ing district from the floods of the river. During my own visits in July 1968, there were always some one hundred people sitting around on wooden deckchairs, sipping good tea and eating melon seeds or peanuts, in the shade of trees and in the breeze from the river. A microphone carried the teller's voice to all around. The story-tellers were appointed by the tea shop operator who thus got much more business than he would have had otherwise. Mr. Li now told the heroic novel "Hero of the Poisonous Sword" (*Tu chien Hsia*), a novel of which I was not able to get the text. He told Mr. Wang about his art:

When I tell stories I never look into the book, and therefore, my story is not quite like the book. Whoever tells on the basis of the book is closer to the book, but then is not as lively. In dialogues, I do not have to say, "Who talked now?", because I indicate this through the intonation. If a sad, sorrowful man speaks, I speak soft, passively. If a man speaks who is about to beat up another man, I speak loudly and quickly, often even coarsely. If an official speaks, his intonation is strict and impressive; but if a criminal speaks, his intonation is mournful, like: "Sir on high, people say a thief is caught in the village and an adulterer in the bed. Please do not listen to biased testimonials." This way of speaking arouses the pity of people and they will say, "What a nice man this is." But as soon the official has heard this, he will shout at him with a loud voice, "You mean guy, you say that you are innocent, but how can that person there make false accusations without any reasons? Quickly, bring him forth!" With such an intonation the audience immediately understands everything just as if they were present and talked. This is a re-working (of the printed text). I am the only teller in Taipei who can perform without looking into the book.

Because I have a very good memory for personal names, geographical names and designations of time periods, I can memorize them after having read them once. Thus I can mention them in other connections, to connect

events with one another. I have been telling stories for twenty years and can tell many stories. A person who performs on the basis of a book may add or cut here and there, but only very little. When I am performing, I read, on the average, one and a half hours for each evening, but this is not always so. Because I have so much experience, I can control the time: I can expand or abbreviate the content, or I can insert bits of other stories into the tale. If my time runs out and if I have still much to say, I abbreviate and omit details. During my performance, I abbreviate all complex things, such as what kind of dress the person was wearing and similar details. When I tell my stories, I start from one event or from one person and set it or him into the real story, such as, "In Chi-ch'ing-fu in Shantung, on a winter day, snowflakes flew in the wind. The willow trees were all without leaves, and there was nobody on the streets. Suddenly, two persons came from the north and ran to the south. Why did these two persons run?" At this place, I can expand the description of the winter scene, but I also can describe the city of Chi-ch'ing-fu in Shantung. The most important is that I describe these two persons. But I also could describe the background of these persons fully in my own words, and by doing so, I can make the story lively and can also make numerous insertions. I also can describe the heroes in the story by their movements, so that the audience understands them clearly.

The other Mr. Li who told *Wan-hua-lou* in late 1967, was now telling episodes of the famous novel *Hsi-yo chi* (The Travel to the West). It should be remarked that episodes from this novel were shown as movies in 1967 but also at the time when he told the story. Interviewed by Mr. Wang Ch'ing-li on May, 30, 1968, he said about his techniques:

Before my presentation I read the book, so that I know the structure of the book when I say the first sentence, so that I can think about what to say in the second sentence. Thus, I can achieve continuity in telling. Normally, I read more than one hour when I want to tell one hour, because in many places, I just have to make a brief allusion in order to achieve continuity. If I am too wordy, the story loses in interest or becomes ununderstandable.

(Question: Which points do you have to allude to, only?) This I can tell you only when I read the book. When one tells, one finds by oneself what has to be told and where additions have to be made. In the novels there are many places where one understands and one does not have to tell. This means that there are expressions and sentences which cannot be told as they are. If one would do so, nobody would understand it. In such cases you have to "split words." "Split words" means that you make a whole sentence out of one word or replace an expression by another, more popular one. Sometimes you have to give an example, or one has to put into the text a similar expression. Take as example the word "lo" which can be pronounced gan, loo, gac. The first spelling means "unusual", the second "joy", and the third "Music". Therefore, when telling stories, we cannot use such words as they are, but have to split them. But by splitting the words, one must not destroy

the continuity of the story. Further: *pai-hua* (conversational language) can be told as it is. People can understand it. But when *pai-hua* is used in conversation, it is normally limited to superficialities and does not penetrate the deeper meaning. Then people understand only the superficial meaning. Thus, we have to split the words up and give an example which is understood by everybody. Therefore the presentation and the text are not the same.

(Question: When does one improve upon the story by making additions?) Additions depend upon the situation. For example, when (in the winter) I performed in the temple, I added a couple of moralistic examples. But now here, I can insert more funny details. But it is hard for me to say where I have to insert and where to cut. I can say that only when I have read the text.

The third story-teller, Mr. K'ang, had in the meantime been excluded from the group because he was not regarded as good enough. We heard that he told his stories separately near the Taipei bridge, whenever he found a sufficiently large audience. If not, he just went home. We did not meet him during our visits.

Both interviewees mention processes which we noticed in our own analysis, though on the basis of their interviews, we would have assumed that they changed much more than we actually found out. None of them mentions the other process, the translation of a text written in standard Chinese into an oral version in Min-nan dialect. For a person whose dialect is Min-nan and who is at the same time literate, this kind of translation seems to be "natural". We noticed with all our copyists whom we had asked to copy tales taken in Min-nan language without any changes upon IBM cards, that they changed Min-nan expressions into standard language without even being aware of this and against their will. Yet, such changes of expressions, often meant slight changes in the meaning.

V

All three narrators obviously satisfied their audiences although they recited printed novels and did not tell original stories. All three of them chose stories of the heroic-story type, i.e., stories in which individual heroism, war, fighting, bravery, loyalty and patriotism were glorified. Romantic love and family life do not play an important role in these novels, although adventures might be caused by a love affair. Surveys of several Taipei "lending Libraries", those small stalls which supply the middle and lower classes with reading materials for a very modest fee, had the following results: each library had on the average 1390 different books, of which 41 % were heroic novels, 33 % comic books for children and 26 % romantic and detective novels. The picture was, however, quite different when the available number of copies were considered rather than the different book titles. While of the romantic and detective novels the libraries had an average of not quite 1.5 copies per book, they had 27 or more copies of each of the heroic novels, so that in the total inventory of the libraries, 84 % of all books were heroic novels, 14 % comics and only 2 % romantic and

detective novels. To be sure, these data¹⁸ which are based upon the estimates of the owners of five libraries in different parts of the city, have to be taken as rough estimates, though glancing through other libraries, I got the impression that they were fairly accurate. The owners estimated that about 35 % of the readers of these heroic novels were persons over 30 years of age, about 65 % of them male. Readers between 20 and 30 were said to be the greatest consumers of heroic novels. The over-all preference to heroic novels among the customers of the lending libraries fits the fact that the story-tellers, who address themselves mainly to lower class males of higher age, evidently believe that heroic novels have the greatest appeal.

All novels dealt with events which supposedly took place in the distant past, between 1200 and 450 years before the present. Not one dealt with events of the recent past or of the present time. This can only be explained by saying that tales of contemporary or recent events may bring the teller into difficulties with the politicians. A very similar emphasis on the heroic past was found in temple paintings, in illustrated sets of examples of filial piety, and in statements on oracle slips.¹⁹ Also most of the novels which nowadays the newspapers carry in installments every day—and some newspapers carry more than three novels concurrently—are historical novels of the heroic type, though recently written by contemporary writers. However, at any given time at least one of the newspapers carries a novel about people in Taiwan at the present time.

The main point of interest in the heroic novels is the way how the hero or heroine or their gang defeats the others by clever tricks or great bravery. This involves always the detailed description of a great amount of cruelty and violence. We had made the same observation already when studying other folk materials.²⁰

Finally, let us look at our story-tellers' tales from the point of view of the traditional Chinese literary historians. They did not regard novels, short-stories and theatre plays as "literature" and often stated that it is, to say the least, a waste of time to read such stuff, instead of "true literature". Without intending to discuss the reasons for this evaluation, I want to call attention to a point which I believe, has not yet been made: What traditional Chinese literary historians regarded as "literature" consisted of works cast in final form allowing no changes and they excluded from "literature" all those works which customarily were subject to deliberate changes, leading to different versions. No traditional Chinese novel, short-story or play has been unchangeable. In other words, they are still alive. We know that all great novels were worked on by several persons; all were arranged and re-arranged, expanded or abbreviated, and must therefore be distinguished from the novels in Western literature, which can have only one, namely the original author's version. The Chinese Communist editors of novels were perhaps the first to "tamper" for political reasons with some classical stories by

¹⁸ I am obliged to Mr. Hsü Kuo-san who interviewed the owners of the libraries.

¹⁹ See my "Orakel und Theater in China" *Asiatische Studien* 18, 1965, pp. 11—18.

²⁰ See my "Topics and Moral Values in Chinese Temple Decorations", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 87, 1967, p. 22—32.

cutting out sections which they regarded as ideologically unfit, changing other sections or making additions. One regards these changes as improper political action but one must not forget that, on principal, what has been done to novels in Communist China has been common practice throughout the centuries. Before rejecting completely the classical theatre, Communist editors in China also changed theatre plays, and much more radically than they changed novels. In this field of dramatic literature the general Chinese practice is closer to our own: our stage directors, too, take liberties with the scripts of plays, cutting out sections or re-arranging scenes, although rarely if ever adding a scene or even a line. B. Brecht went farthest in deviating from a script when he directed one of his own works.

Novels can now be subdivided into two classes. Although in principle they all can be changed, the first class comprises some novels which were never changed (such as *Ching-hua-yüan*) and novels which were changed or enlarged by scholars (such as *Hung-lou-meng*). The novels of this type did not become part of the folk tradition: Story-tellers do not tell them, and they led to no ballads and only few, if any, theatre plays. The novels of the second class gave origin to numerous ballads, theatre, shadow and puppet plays and were used by story-tellers. The novels of the first class were addressed to the more educated young people; those of the second class to the less educated of all ages. What the story-teller does with a novel of the second class should not be called "falsification" but the "life process" of the novel. The written or printed form is not final but temporary or preliminary, valid at a certain time for a certain kind of audience. It is a living story which changes and develops continuously, and the story-teller is the agent of change. He tells the story as he feels his audience likes to hear it. An especially able story-teller might produce a new version of a novel which either he or someone else might write down, thus creating a new version which might kill all previous ones. In this way many a Chinese novel is "folk literature": It is alive, changing through the ages, adjusting to new environments and new times. Story-teller after story-teller uses the same story, most of them anonymous; usually without influence upon the novel. But one day, one of them has the imagination and the creativity to make essential changes, though it is likely that his name does not become known.

The question has been asked: Are there no Chinese story-tellers who tell their own stories or at least original stories? I have seen only one, but authors writing in this style abound in Taiwan. However, they seem to work for the puppet theatre and the radio stations. Almost next door to the temple where our three story-tellers performed was the office of three puppet-play companies, operated by a man, his younger brother and that brother's son. In the office, one meets only an employee who accepts orders for performances. The players travelled around Taipei and the nearby towns and villages, wherever they were asked to play. At the end of 1967, each of these three companies had a one-play repertory. The titles of these three plays were "The Little Divine Falcon" (*Hsiao shen-ying*), "The Hero with the Golden Knife" (*Chin-tao hsia*), and the "White Horse Hero" (*Pai-ma hsia*). Obviously, all these stories were of the heroic type. The

"Little Divine Falcon" was written daily—one sequence per day—and, according to the writer,²¹ it will go on endlessly, "perhaps for thirty years". The other stories, too, were "endless". This means that the writer ties one episode after another to a basic setting, continuing as long as he likes or as long as his audience is satisfied. Each episode lasts one or several days, so that even if the audience shifts continuously, they still can follow the action. The same can be done for the radio, in a way similar to the pattern of the American soap opera, and I heard that²² a Mr. Chang Tsai-hsing, who was interviewed in a tea house nearby, was just writing a love story, "Hurt Feelings leave Scars", which he hoped to sell to a radio station. That he writes a love-story for the radio may be an adjustment to the assumed needs of radio audiences, but it might be his own preference. I have seen numerous puppet shows of the above-mentioned heroic type and found that very few people in the audience were able to tell what the whole story was about. They just enjoyed the action, especially the beatings and fights. In my observation, the fight scenes in which there was nothing spoken, lasted three to four times longer than the scenes in which a dialogue was held.

Although these plays are written specifically for the puppet theatre, the text used by the player is in the same style as the texts of the story-teller, i.e. it contains prose sections and does not consist only of dialogues. I will give a few sentences from another puppet play, the "Shapeless Great Spear Hero" (*Wu-hsing ta piao-k'o*), which was performed in Taipei near the Great Taipei Bridge from November on in a special, modernized puppet-theatre.²³ This theatre was quite large, with a capacity of certainly more than 600 persons, and therefore equipped with modern sound equipment, which produced an deafening effect. When we visited the show, the theatre was almost filled, mostly with younger men between 20 and 30 years of age, relatively few old men and almost no women. The play had already been on for five weeks and was supposed to continue for quite a while into the year 1968. The episode we saw had the title "Blood Colors the Bridge of the Lovers". The general context was that a divine heroine had been blinded when she made her sword. Only by marrying she could regain her sight. She had found a husband and given birth to a child, but before she had regained her eyesight, husband and child had disappeared. She was now searching for her husband. The people in Central China, where the action played, all knew that the "Great Spear Hero" was her husband, but neither did he admit it, nor did the people inform the heroine, because once she knew, she would unite with her husband the couple would, together with their gangs, have more power than the opposing clique. The topic of the two

²¹ Interviewed by Mr. Wang Ch'ing-li, to whom I want to express my thanks here.

²² Interviews by Mr. Wang Ch'ing-li.

²³ Mr. Wang Ch'ing-li interviewed the performer and took a tape-recording of one session. I saw another session of the same episode. In June 1968, the theatre was closed. Thus, the story must have come to an end before June. At the time, the show was running, a Taiwanese film with the title "The Bridge of the Lovers" was also running in Taipei. The content of the film was quite different from the content of the show.

gangs, one basically defending the Good, the other one the Evil, is very typical of heroic novels since the time of the first known novels of this type.²⁴ The hero, on his flight, meets a man:

Narration 5:

"The Night-Spear-Hero" (Yeh piao k'o) ran away limping and met the "Miraculous-Soul-Traveller" (Ling hun yo) who shouted: "On purpose you feigned defeat and hoped to get together with the Fire-dragon (Huo-lung). I have to kill you today." Thus he had seen through the plans of Night-Spear Hero. Night-Spear Hero really had not been wounded, and now attacked the Traveller and wounded him seriously. When he was about to die, he saw the (Fire-dragon) Rare-Saintly-girl. Traveller said, "Fire-Good-dragon! Do you think that Night-Spear Hero is your husband?" The girl said, "If not he, who else?" Traveller, "Hero is not your husband, and if you do not believe it, go down to the old invalid at the foot of this mountain. I am murdered today by the Hero, because he feigned defeat and ran away, wanting to get together with you and buy your heart. But I knew his plans, and thus I was murdered by him. Think, what kind of man he is." After these words, he died. The girl believed him and looked for the old invalid. The old invalid said, "Your husband was my friend. He was killed by the Hero. Because I wanted to save my friend, I was slain by the Hero. Therefore I am an invalid today and live in hiding." The girl immediately got furious and said she would take revenge for her husband. She flew up (into the air) and disappeared. On her way she thought, "I cannot provoke him too much. I first must find out the situation, only then can I kill the Hero." But then she remembered that the Hero was the murderer of her husband, got into rage again, immediately went to the Hero and asked him searchingly, "Hero, do you know who my husband is? Please tell me." The hero said, "I do know who he is, but I cannot tell you, because he is the most hated man of all ten thousand religions. If I tell you, even you could get involved with him." The girl who knew that he was not her husband, jumped up and cut off his head. Seconds later, the girl took the Hero's head and brought it to the old invalid, saying, "Old man, I have already taken revenge and brought the hero's head." With this, she went away.

This sample may suffice to show that this story, although specifically written for the puppet theatre, was in its style like all the other heroic novels. It could just as well be told by a story-teller or be printed as a novel. The puppet player, sitting behind the screen and moving his puppets together with his attendants, read from a text (which, however, was hand-written) but automatically he adjusted the text to the needs of the puppet stage by leaving out all descriptive sentences and concentrating on the speech sections.

Thus we see the basic unity of novel, story-teller's tale, and play. All are continuously reshaped and re-edited, according to the specific needs of the

²⁴ For instance *Feng-shen yen-i*, but also *Sui-T'ang yen-i* and similar historical heroic novels.

moment, by story-tellers, puppet-show performers, writers, printers—and sometimes by government censors or ideologists. Sometimes the author of a novel is given. But this name has a clear meaning for us only when we know that he was the first author. Often a text is published without the name of the author because the publishers or his editor may have made changes. The longer a novel lives, going through the cycle of being told and perhaps rewritten and performed, the more people participate in its growth, the more it becomes a piece of real folk literature.